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ABSTRACT

Many states that are implementing programs designed to institute higher academic standards are seeing signs that suggest they might want to "slow" some efforts, "stop" others, or "detour" to explore a different approach. Now is a good time for state leaders to take stock of lessons learned so they can review and refine approaches to educational reform. The State Education Improvement Partnership (SEIP) created this overview report to help governors, state legislators, members of state boards of education, and chief state school officers in realizing opportunities in standards-based education reform and to provide policymakers and opinion leaders with a national update and perspective on standards-based reform efforts. It highlights successes and puts current challenges in context; shares promising practices and recognizes the reality that dramatic improvements are possible and, in many places, already under way; and spurs continuing actions by policymakers, educators, parents, and others to put public education systems into practice that help many more students reach the desired standards. This report points out the ways of sustaining school improvement. (RT)

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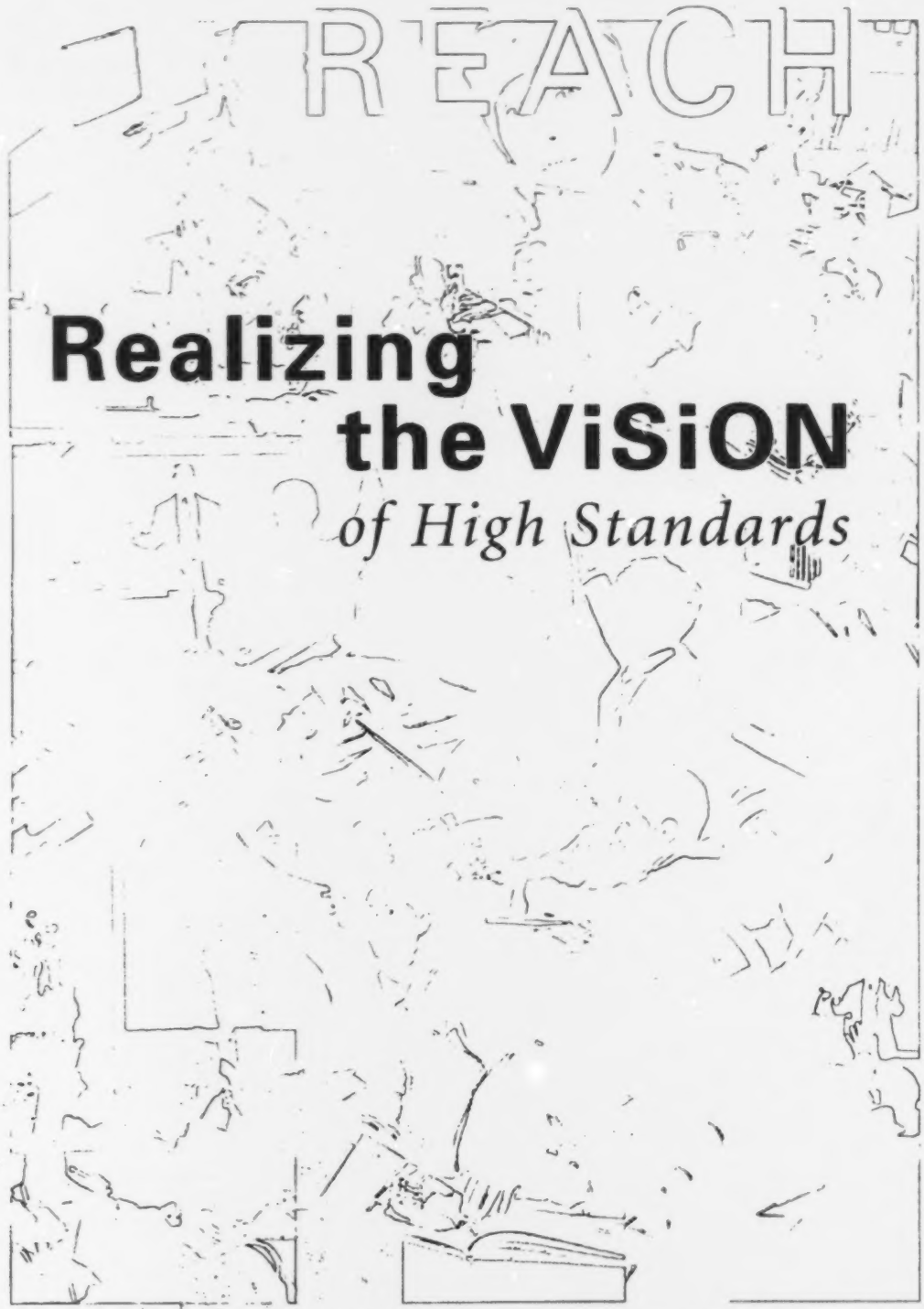
REACH

Realizing the ViSiON *of High Standards*



A Report of the State Education Improvement Partnership

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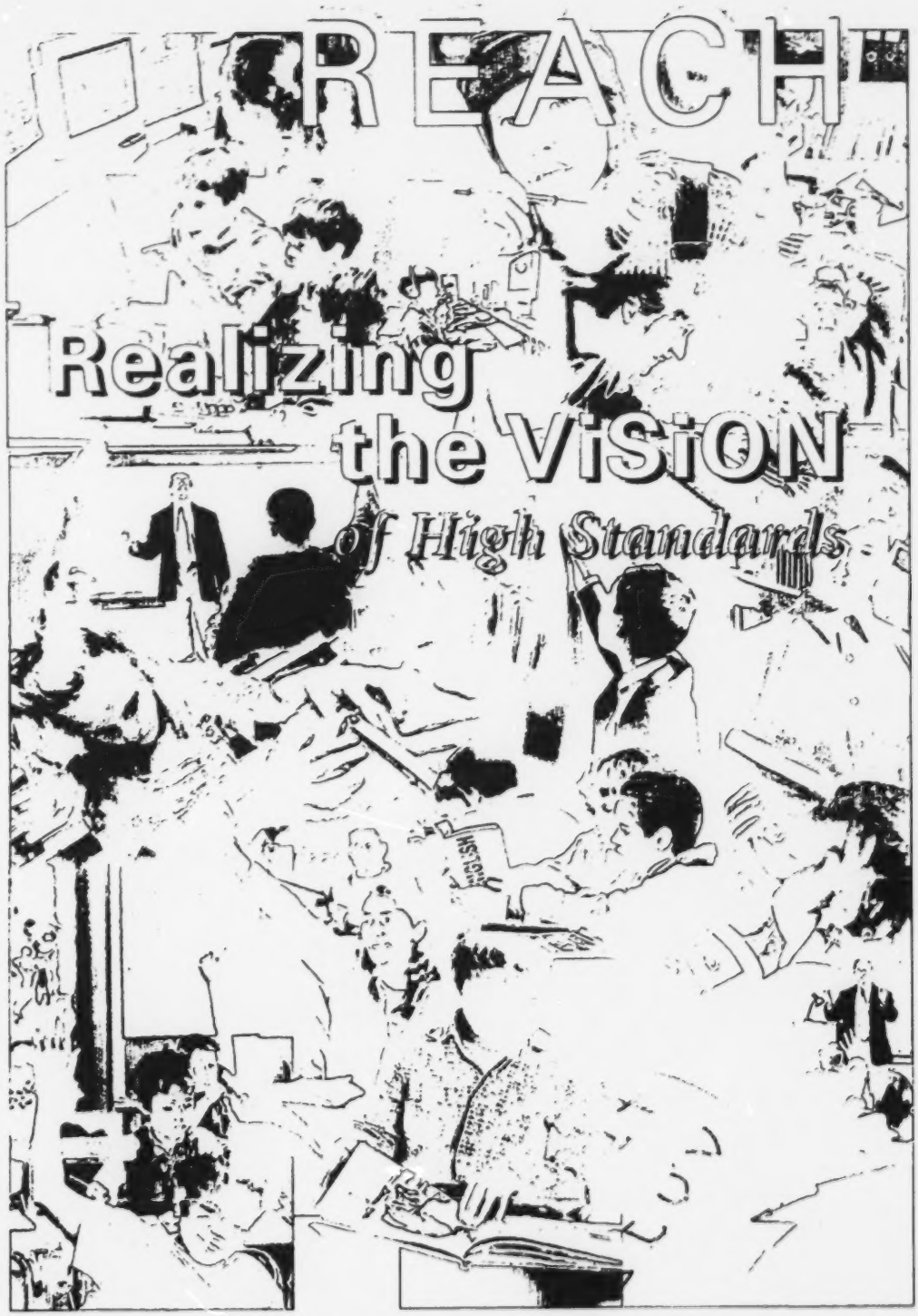

A Report of the State Education Improvement Partnership

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State Education Improvement Partnership

The State Education Improvement Partnership (SEIP) is a collaboration among the five state-based organizations whose members have primary responsibility for state education policy: Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Commission of the States, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors Association. Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Education. Partnership activities include providing technical assistance services to states on systemic education improvements; sponsoring national and regional conferences; providing in-state working sessions; providing telephone and Internet consultation; and producing guidance documents for policymakers and state-level governing staff responsible for education: governors, legislatures, state boards of education, and state education agencies.

"We must never retreat from high standards, rigorous assessment, and accountability for results."

— Governor Bob Taft, Ohio

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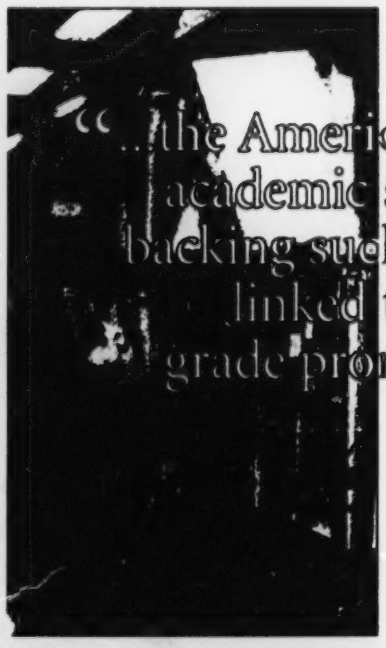
Introduction

On the road to higher academic standards, many states are seeing signs that suggest they might want to "slow" some efforts, "stop" others or "detour" to explore a different approach. This is natural. As the stakes rise under new assessment and accountability systems, state leaders recognize the need to continually review and refine approaches. Now, in fact, is a good time to take stock of lessons learned. Many states have paved the way for education reform by drafting standards and creating standards-based assessment and accountability strategies.

To help governors, state legislators, members of state boards of education and chief state school officers chart a sure course for standards-based reform, the State Education Improvement Partnership (SEIP) has created this overview of where we have been—and where we still have important work to do. This report will:

- ☐ provide policymakers and opinion leaders with a national update and perspective on standards-based education reform—to highlight successes and put current challenges in context;
- ☐ share promising practices and recognize the reality that dramatic improvements are possible and, in many places, already underway; and
- ☐ spur continuing actions by policymakers, educators, parents, and others—not just to set policies that mandate higher standards, but to put into practice public education systems that help many more students reach those elevated standards.

This report points out the ways of sustaining school improvement. Working together, we can ensure progress for our students, families and communities.



"...the American public favors setting rigorous academic standards for students and backing such standards with statewide tests linked to high school graduation and grade promotion."

— The Business Roundtable

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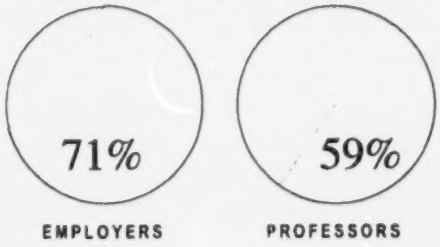
Moving Forward Together

No two states have followed the same path to higher standards. As a result, some states have witnessed unprecedented gains in student achievement and a renewed commitment to effective teaching and learning. Others have grappled with complaints about harmful and narrow curricula, lawsuits alleging discriminatory testing practices, and organized efforts to derail educational innovations. Taken together, the successes and shortcomings of standards-based reform underscore the risks and opportunities that await us.

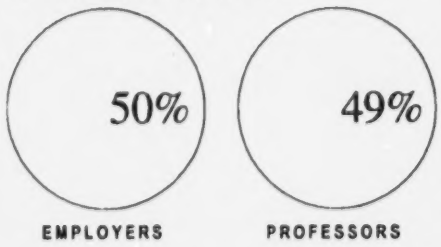
Employers and Professors Remain Dissatisfied
Percent giving recent high school graduates *poor* or *fair* ratings on:

WRITING CLEARLY

MOTIVATION & CONSCIENTIOUSNESS



SPEAK ENGLISH WELL



source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check 2000*

We have a special opportunity to make much-needed improvements in public education. Our schools, although better in many ways than those of a generation ago, are not suited for today's challenges. Only about one-third of U.S. students are proficient in reading, and only about one-fifth show proficiency in mathematics, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Especially alarming in this era of global competition, U.S. high school seniors earned lower scores in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study than their peers in almost every other developed country. It is no wonder that 60 percent of employers say graduates lack the skills they need on the job.

To correct these problems, many states have set higher academic standards for students, have administered tests aligned with standards, and have developed accountability systems to spur school improvement. There is strong support for such efforts. The Business Roundtable released results of a survey that assessed public attitudes regarding state standards and assessments. The results show that the American public favors setting rigorous academic standards for students and backing such

standards with statewide tests linked to high school graduation and grade promotion. Oversamples were conducted in three states—Illinois, New York and Virginia. Public Agenda also reports in *Reality Check 2000*, a study of public attitudes about education, that a majority of employers, college professors, teachers, and parents favor these educational guidelines as well as the common tests students increasingly must pass to graduate.

Those polled also say, however, that standards should focus on mastering the basics, struggling students should have strong support and opportunities to catch up, and decisions about holding students back should not be based on results from a single test. Indeed, high-stakes testing programs have encountered stiff opposition in several states, where critics, ranging from concerned parents to civil rights groups, have complained that assessments and consequences are being administered unfairly, causing unprecedented numbers of students to be held back or denied diplomas.

Opposition to poorly constructed tests, however, must not be confused with opposition to standards. One of the clear messages emerging from these developments is that the public believes standards-based school reform is worth doing but must be done right.

The answer is not to turn back but to move ahead on the road to standards-based reform

Employers and Professors Remain Dissatisfied

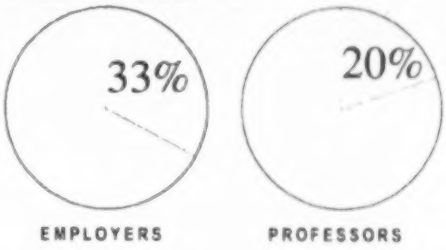
Percent giving recent high school graduates *poor* or *fair* ratings on:

source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check 2000*

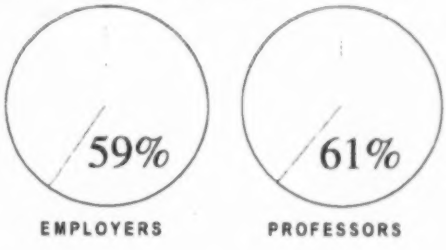
Employers and Professors Remain Dissatisfied

Percent giving recent high school graduates *poor* or *fair* ratings on:

COMPUTER SKILLS



BASIC MATH SKILLS



WORK HABITS—organized & on time

source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check 2000*

and to sustain the progress made so far, remaining mindful of the many lessons learned over the past decade. In addition to reviewing and strengthening their existing standards, assessments and accountability systems, state education leaders now must collaborate to align policy in five additional areas: 1) high-quality teachers, 2) strong professional development, 3) educational leadership, 4) reporting on performance, and 5) parent and community partnerships.

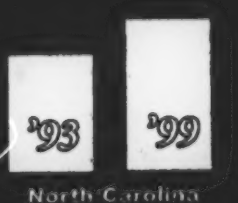
Standing at the crossroads of risk and opportunity, states have the power to create the strong public school systems we need to meet the social, economic, and political challenges of life in the 21st century. Members of the SEIP recognize that all must work together as state education leaders—governors, state legislators, chief state school officers, and state boards of education—to guarantee that our constituents continue to thrive in the new millennium. The combined forces of technology, globalization, and increased competition are altering the knowledge and skills needed for participation in the New Economy.

Working together across organizational boundaries, we can provide educators with the support they need to help students meet demanding standards. However, the reaction against single-measure tests and accountability systems in some states underscores the challenge. As the nation's governors and top business executives affirmed in a statement at the 1999 National Education Summit, raising standards and developing tests may have been the easiest part of the journey; the more daunting task is ensuring that all students reach these standards.

STATES THAT STAY THE COURSE REAP RESULTS

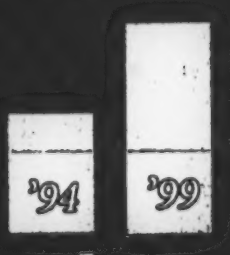
States with a longstanding commitment to high academic standards, to aligned assessment and to tough accountability are raising student achievement. Connecticut, North Carolina and Texas, in particular, have boosted student test scores, showing steady progress for the better part of the past decade through a sustained focus on standards-based education.

- In **Connecticut**, the percentage of students in grades 4, 6, and 8 who meet state education goals for reading, writing and mathematics **increased 17 percent** between 1993 and 1999. On the 1998 NAEP, students' reading achievement was the highest in the nation. All students also perform better than their counterparts in other states.



- The share of students in grades 3 to 8 whose scores showed proficiency in reading and mathematics on the **North Carolina** state test **rose 16 percent** from 1993 to 1999. North Carolina students also made greater combined achievement gains on NAEP reading and math tests than students in other states.

- In **Texas**, the percentage of students in grades 3 to 8 and in grade 10 who passed the state assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics **soared 25 percent** from 1994 to 1999. Furthermore, Texas has been widely recognized for raising achievement among all students, including minority, low-income and non-English-speaking students. These gains have been confirmed, at least partly, by simultaneous gains on the NAEP.



[illegible] Center on Education Policy, and recently studied North Carolina and Texas for the National Education Goals Panel, found that the gains these states are [illegible] attributable to factors commonly credited for such progress, such as increased school spending [illegible] the federal government's major role in promoting challenging grade standards with a great emphasis [illegible] standards that apply to all students, state [illegible] and the adoption of [illegible] systems based on standards-driven assessments.

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Realizing the ViSiON *of High Standards*

Education leaders in many states already are working together across organizational boundaries to align policies and practices with the central goal of improved student performance. Typical innovations revolve around the essential components of standards-based school reform efforts: standards, assessments, accountability, high-quality teachers, strong professional development, educational leadership, reporting on performance, and parent and community partnerships.

The following pages pose some key questions to governors, legislators, state education chiefs, and members of state boards of education that ask how well their states are doing in the major areas of standards-based school reform. We also provide examples of promising practices to illustrate some different innovations being explored in states across the country. While no single approach will work for all states, these examples show the broad spectrum of possibilities.

"State involvement in extra learning opportunities is critical, because extra learning opportunities span so many agencies (education, child care, juvenile justice, and health and human services). States need to make sure these agencies are communicating and supporting each other's efforts."

— Argeo Paul Cellucci, former Governor of Massachusetts

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Taking a Fresh Look at Standards

State education leaders cannot afford to rest on their laurels, but they have made a good start. Forty-nine states have set standards for the subject matter students should master in English, mathematics and science. Most states also have set standards for social studies. Some states have even taken steps to ensure their standards compete favorably against the best in the world. A good start, but only a start.

To make higher expectations a reality for students, we must do more to raise the quality, rigor, and appropriateness of standards. We must deepen standards to spell out not only what students should know but also the levels of academic performance they need to demonstrate. We must provide the standards-based curriculum materials, training, and technology needed **to help teachers realize the vision of standards in the classroom**. Finally, we must continue to build understanding about this new approach to education among teachers, administrators, students, parents, government leaders and others.

ask yourself...

- ☐ How well are state standards generally understood, accepted, and endorsed by the teachers and students who must use them? To what extent have you involved citizens outside the school community in developing standards and communicated with them about how the standards are being used?
- ☐ Do teachers agree that state standards have sufficient depth, breadth and specificity to effectively guide teaching and learning? Or do they instead say the standards emphasize rote memorization over deep understanding, present a laundry list of topics too numerous to be taught or learned meaningfully, or describe academic goals too vaguely to guide classroom activities?
- ☐ Have you commissioned an independent evaluation of your standards to determine how well they compare with exemplary standards from other parts of the nation and the world?
- ☐ What are your plans for periodically reviewing, revising and updating standards to ensure they reflect changes in what is known about curriculum content, teaching practice, and public perceptions of them?

PROMISING PRACTICES

- ☐ Science-content standards in **Connecticut** provide clear direction to teachers and test makers. The standards not only describe what students must learn but also provide information on how young people learn and guidance on specific teaching strategies. At every grade level, the standards provide the basis for curriculum, state assessments, and accountability.

- ☐ English language arts standards in **California** provide in-depth, comprehensive coverage of the building blocks of literacy, including reading fundamentals and writing conventions. In addition, the standards feature a parent-friendly glossary of definitions for many academic terms used.

- ☐ **Colorado** recently established "performance standards" to guide evaluation of student performance on the state assessment that combines multiple-choice and performance items. Work is assessed as "unsatisfactory," "partially proficient," "proficient" or "advanced," depending on how well students meet an increasingly demanding set of criteria. For example, proficient readers "locate and select relevant information," while advanced readers "locate, select, synthesize and evaluate relevant information."

Assessing to Strengthen Teaching and Learning

Assessments based on standards help us understand what our students are learning, what our schools are teaching and what we can do to support student progress toward important educational goals. That's why assessment is more important than ever before. Today, 48 states administer statewide tests in reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. State education leaders use results from these tests to inform policy decisions. Teachers use standards-based evaluation techniques in the classroom to strengthen teaching and enhance learning.

But these increases in testing—along with the high failure rates and high stakes for performance that often accompany them initially—bring new challenges to states. Groups representing parents, civil rights advocates, and local control proponents have sought to undermine high-stakes assessments in some states. The complaints leveled against assessment systems highlight the challenges faced by states.

Tests should be not only tough but also fair. They should be reliable, well-constructed measures with credibility to the education community and to the public. Steps should be taken to ensure accurate evaluation of special education students and children with limited proficiency in English. Moreover, the appropriate use of tests must be guaranteed so those tests are used to measure only that for which they have been designed.

States that develop high-quality assessment systems closely aligned with standards can avoid many barriers to effective reform. States that use this approach at the school and classroom levels help make standards a tool for improving teaching and learning in daily practice. States can do this by training educators to measure student performance continually against standards-based expectations.

ask yourself...

- ☐ Do you use multiple measures to assess the wide range of student knowledge and skills described in state standards?
- ☐ Have you constructed an assessment system designed specifically to measure student performance against state standards or have you purchased a generic, off-the-shelf assessment that is not closely aligned with those standards?
- ☐ How thoroughly have you explored and accounted for the potential legal and equity issues raised in the high-stakes testing of children with limited English proficiency and children with disabilities?
- ☐ How effectively do you communicate to the public what assessments measure, what results mean, and how they are used?
- ☐ Have you commissioned an independent evaluation of your state assessment system to examine its rigor, its alignment with state standards, its usefulness in guiding curriculum and instruction, and its overall quality in comparison to exemplary assessment systems across the country?

PROMISING PRACTICES

- ☐ The assessment system in **Vermont** includes "portfolios"—representative collections of student work over time—as well as standardized tests. The student portfolios in writing and mathematics enable educators to monitor students' progress and address specific strengths and weaknesses. Students who maintained a portfolio for at least two years scored significantly better than peers who kept a portfolio for less than a year, according to findings from the 1998 New Standards Reference Exam in mathematics.

- ☐ Starting in the fall of 2001, **Maryland** is requiring high school students to pass end-of-course tests in English, government, and algebra or geometry to earn a diploma. The tests, part of the state's standards-based assessment system, will be supplemented with release of individual student scores on norm-referenced assessments that rank student performance relative to other students' performance and on criterion-referenced tests that rate student performance relative to a benchmark standard. The move accommodates parental requests for individual test scores.

- ☐ A study of **Oregon** high school students who received the state's Certificate of Initial Mastery (a certificate awarded to students who achieve 10th-grade academic standards in English, math, science, social studies, arts and a second language) found that those who met state standards for reading, writing, and math were twice as likely as their peers to demonstrate to employers that they have the knowledge and skills needed on the job. Seventy-five percent of those who met the Oregon standards passed a pre-employment test, but only 39 percent of students who did not meet the standards passed that test. Beginning in the 2004–2005 school year, a Certificate of Advanced Mastery will be awarded to students who demonstrate their competence in rigorous academic standards (English, math, science, social sciences, arts, and a second language) and career-life skills (communication, teamwork, and problemsolving).

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Balancing Accountability With Support for Success

To ensure schools and districts are implementing policies designed to hold all students to high standards, states are developing systems to hold local educators accountable for student learning. Elements of those systems include performance reports, incentives, consequences, and assistance as catalysts for school improvement. For example, 45 states publicly report on performance at individual schools, according to *Education Week*. States also use other approaches, such as rewarding schools that make significant progress, taking over struggling schools, offering bonuses to educators at high-performing schools, or denying diplomas to students who fail graduation exams.

Surveys from Public Agenda and Business Roundtable consistently show that a majority of parents, employers, and students favor high-stakes tests and other forms of accountability. The surveys also demonstrate how sound accountability systems should provide students with academic support, opportunities to catch up if they fall behind, and multiple ways to show what they know before invoking high-stakes consequences. Critics say some systems punish students and educators unfairly by relying too much on single measures, failing to support those who struggle, motivating students and educators to cheat, causing schools to focus resources inequitably on select students, and prodding schools to concentrate on test preparation at the expense of a more varied curriculum.

Schools need support to meet the unprecedented expectations set for them. Children, teachers and administrators need high-quality programs, materials, and services to meet high standards, including early childhood programs to prepare children for kindergarten, extra learning opportunities to support ongoing academic success, strong professional development to help teachers adapt instructional strategies, and assistance to help low-performing schools improve services to students.

ask yourself...

- ☐ How well does your accountability system monitor shared responsibility for academic success among students, parents, teachers, administrators, public education system leaders and other community members?
- ☐ In what ways do you provide schools with meaningful incentives for success, effective assistance for improvement and fair consequences for failure? How is the state seeking to build capacity in low-performing schools?
- ☐ Are students given opportunities to show academic proficiency in multiple ways, such as standardized tests, portfolios of exemplary work, coursework, and special projects before invoking high-stakes accountability measures for failure? Or, instead, are students and schools being sanctioned on the basis of a single-measure assessment that many community members complain is inadequate and unfair?
- ☐ How well does the public understand and support school accountability measures? How well do teachers and school administrators understand and support these measures?
- ☐ How do you support student success? Are early childhood education programs widely available and effective in preparing children for standards-based education? What types of extra learning opportunities (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, and before- and after-school study programs) do you provide to help struggling students attain standards? How are standards-based training and capacity-building assistance made available to schools?

PROMISING PRACTICES

- ☐ The accountability system of **North Carolina**, called the ABCs of Public Education, stipulates consequences for both schools and students based on scores on the state assessment. The state creates an "expected growth" composite for each school based on the school's previous performance and statewide average growth. Low-performing schools qualify for assistance in aligning curriculum and standards, while high-performing schools can receive cash awards and recognition. Students must show progress in writing and meet state and local graduation requirements. Student accountability increased in the 2000–2001 school year, when fifth-graders were tested, and those who did not meet state standards became eligible for special intervention and retention if the principal decided it was the best course of action. Accountability will increase again in 2003, when high school students will be required to pass an exit exam. Students will be offered opportunities to retest as well as additional help to build the skills needed to pass the exam.
- ☐ In **Pennsylvania**, consistently high-performing schools and low-performing schools that make significant progress can earn performance awards for achievement and effort. Thousands of schools have received awards for improvement in state assessment scores, student attendance rates and graduation rates. The 1998–1999 state budget allocated more than $13 million for the School Performance Funding Program. Each school that receives an award must use at least 50 percent of the grant for planning, delivery, and assessment of instruction. Up to 25 percent may be spent on staff rewards.
- ☐ The **Texas** Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is the basis for the state's high-profile accountability system. Schools fall into one of four categories based on student performance and dropout and attendance rates. While the standards for the categories differ, all have been raised in recent years as performance has improved. To be ranked in one of the three highest categories, schools and districts must show that students meet passing criteria across racial and ethnic groups. Students must pass all sections of TAAS to earn a high school diploma and may retake any part of the test they do not pass. TAAS remains a widely recognized state assessment system. Texas students in recent years have shown improvement not only on TAAS but on NAEP as well.
- ☐ **Louisiana** provides three levels of assistance or "corrective actions" to low-performing schools. A school that shows inadequate achievement for two years moves from one level of assistance to the next. At the first level, a school mainly uses a state diagnostic process to refine the local improvement plan and reevaluate use of resources. A school at the second level receives assistance from a highly trained "distinguished educator" appointed by the state to give advice and to report publicly on recommendations. If a school is labeled "academically unacceptable," parents may transfer their children to other public schools. For a school at the third level, the district must develop a reconstitution plan for reorganizing the school program and staff to generate improvement. If achievement fails to show sufficient improvement after one year, the state may take over or withdraw state funds from the school.
- ☐ The accountability system in **Tennessee** uses a unique formula to assess school performance in terms of student test score gains. Schools are rated based on change in test scores over time, an approach designed to isolate the "value-added effect" of classroom teachers. School performance is reported publicly. Only school officials, who are expected to use the information to guide improvement, view individual teacher data. In May 2000, 137 Tennessee schools received incentive awards for achieving state education performance goals, including improvement in math test scores based on expectations of students in a three-year period from 9th grade to 12th grade.

profile
EXTRA LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Effective accountability systems provide more than sticks and carrots to motivate change. They also provide support to students who need it.

In a growing number of states across the country, education leaders are collaborating to find ways to supply the extra learning opportunities many students need to meet high standards. These activities provide school-age children with academic, developmental, and recreational activities after school, on the weekends, and over the summer that supplement the education they receive during the school day and school year.

Tutoring, mentoring, homework help, organized sports, arts activities, culture, leadership, community service, and youth development activities also provide positive experiences in the hours immediately after school lets out — a peak time for risk behaviors such as crime and alcohol use — for the 28 million young people whose parents are in the workforce. The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that demand for programs like these will grow by between 1998 and 2002 in many urban areas.

A number of states started their development of programs, partnerships, and systems to provide more learning opportunities for students. Here are a few examples, as identified by the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices:

- In **Illinois**, a six-week literacy program called Summer Bridges targets extra help in the summer to elementary students at risk of being held back. The program provides students with small classes, adequate school supplies, and professional development for teachers in the participating schools. After just one year, the program has achieved mixed results. Nearly 80 percent of third graders and about 65 percent of sixth graders showed significant gains in reading. Because of its success, Summer Bridges tripled in size to accommodate 160,000 students for the summer 2000 program.

- In 2000, **Alabama** Governor Don Siegelman signed the Right Hopes for Alabama's High School Seniors program into law. The program provides $6 million to help those special students at risk of failing the state's new graduation exam. The money will be used for tutoring, exemplary after school programs, summer school, and one-on-one interventions for students struggling with the exam.

- The After-School Care Plus (A+) Program in **Hawaii** provides affordable, statewide after-school child care for the 67,000 students in all of the public elementary schools in the state. Governor Benjamin Cayetano initiated the A+ Program when he served as lieutenant governor in response to the child care crisis in February 1990. The A+ Program offers after-school care with homework assistance, enrichment activities, and supervised recreational activities. The activities are scheduled to meet and extend beyond basic custodial care. A+ services are available from the end of school on each day until 5:30 p.m. on school days during the regular school year.

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- **New Hampshire**
- **South Dakota**
- **Wisconsin**
- **Maryland**

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Hiring and Holding on to High-Quality Teachers

How many of our teachers are ready to teach to high standards? Only one in five feels very well prepared to teach in today's classrooms, according to a recent survey by the U.S. Department of Education. More unsettling, one in five leaves the profession in the first three years, according to a recent analysis by *Education Week*.

States already are grappling with a teacher shortage that is expected to worsen and continue for at least a decade. We need to put teachers in classrooms, but "warm bodies" are not enough. Education stands or falls on the strength of those who deliver it—teachers. A recent analysis by the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy shows that the percentage of well-qualified teachers in a state is the most powerful and consistent predictor of that state's average achievement level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

To ensure a high-quality teaching force, state leaders should explore new strategies to improve teacher preparation, recruitment, retention, licensing and certification, induction, support and evaluation, as well as changes in education school accreditation and policies that support parents' "right to know" the qualifications of their children's teachers.

ask yourself...

- ☐ How well does the state recruit, train, pay, support, and retain high-quality teachers? Do you require demonstrations of classroom ability for teachers to earn a license? Does the state provide mentors and other supports to teachers during their first several years (1-3) of teaching?
- ☐ How thoroughly has the state worked with colleges and universities to align teacher certification programs with K–12 academic standards? Do you have a mechanism in place to hold institutions accountable for the preparation and quality of their graduates?
- ☐ Do you permit individuals from nontraditional backgrounds with content expertise to enter the teaching profession? If you do, are steps taken to ensure they meet relevant requirements? Or, instead, do you relax professional standards and credentialing requirements in ways that lower the quality of instruction for students?
- ☐ Do you offer meaningful incentives for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills, earn national certification, or work in low-performing schools that need quality teachers most?
- ☐ How effectively do you provide incentives for excellent teachers that promote growth—without promoting these teachers out of the classroom?
- ☐ Are parents guaranteed the right to know the qualifications of their children's teachers?

PROMISING PRACTICES

- The 1997 Excellent Schools Act in **North Carolina**, passed with strong support from former Governor James B. Hunt Jr., substantially boosts teacher certification standards and salaries while imposing rigorous accountability measures on educators. Under the law, teachers earn an initial certificate based on completion of preservice training. They can apply for a continuing certificate three years later and renew the continuing certificate every five years after that. Tenured teachers who complete approved graduate studies or show competency as "master teachers" can apply for a "Master's/Advanced Certificate." Moreover, teachers in the state who earn National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification are entitled to a 12-percent salary increase. North Carolina is home to more than 1,200 national board-certified teachers.

- The Center for Teacher Recruitment in **South Carolina**, created by the general assembly in 1986, brings together the state public school system, colleges and universities, professional education associations, and businesses to improve teacher recruitment and retention throughout the state. The center targets middle and high school students, college students and adults. Among the center's accomplishments in the past decade are the growing number of minority students going into education and the growing proportion of state teaching certificates awarded to in-state applicants.

- During the past 15 years, **Connecticut** has raised teacher licensing standards and salaries in an effort to elevate teacher quality. Licensing standards now require each teacher to have a major in the subject to be taught and to pass a licensure exam on subject matter and knowledge of teaching. State funds support a mentoring program for teachers in their first year on the job, after which they are assessed to determine whether they can continue teaching. In addition, all new Connecticut teachers participate in the Beginning Educator Support and Training Portfolio program that provides teachers with opportunities to attend seminars, receive mentoring, and compile a portfolio of their work, including lesson plans, instructional materials and a videotape of classroom practice. The program helps prepare new teachers for the state's rigorous evaluation, which they have two opportunities to pass. Such strategies are paying off. The 2000 edition of *Education Week's* Quality Counts report rated Connecticut, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and North Carolina highest in the nation for teacher quality.

- The **Mississippi** legislature passed the 1998 Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act in an effort to fill specific gaps in the teaching force. The law created a package of innovative recruitment incentives, including the Critical Needs Scholarship Program and the Teacher Fellowship Program. The scholarship program annually provides hundreds of undergraduate students with full scholarships in return for a commitment to teach for three years in a shortage area in the state. The fellowship program offers full scholarships to teachers who relocate to a shortage area while earning a graduate-level degree. Participants in either program also can receive a computer, $1,000 in reimbursement for moving expenses and a loan for a down payment on a house. One-third of the loan amount is forgiven for each year the participant teaches in a shortage area.

- In a departure from the traditional practice of relying on annual evaluations by principals for ongoing assessment of teachers, **California** Governor Gray Davis worked with the state legislature to create a statewide program to help teachers evaluate teachers. The 1999 Teacher Peer Assistance and Review law provides $41.8 million to create district incentives for peer review, a teacher quality-assurance approach that has gained popularity in the past few years and is supported by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

Delivering Strong Professional Development

For teachers to help all students meet high standards, educators must do things they have never done before. To accomplish this, they need more training and support than ever. The typical teacher receives less than eight hours of professional development a year, according to 1998 federal survey data. In most cases, in-service training is sporadic, uneven, poorly supervised and rarely aligned with standards.

States can change these patterns to make standards a success. Through induction, mentoring, peer coaching, and teacher collaborations, teachers can participate in ongoing professional development activities that enable them to continually update their skills, deepen their content knowledge, and learn effective techniques. These experiences are essential for helping teachers teach effectively in today's standards-based classrooms.

ask yourself...

- ☐ Do you offer meaningful professional development opportunities to help teachers build skills and knowledge aligned with standards? Is professional development ongoing, in-depth, content-rich, curriculum-centered, and hands-on?
- ☐ To what extent is state-funded professional development linked to the improvement of teaching and to standards, curriculum, and assessment?
- ☐ Does the state devote at least 1 percent of its education budget to professional development linked to standards?
- ☐ What professional growth opportunities are provided for teachers and administrators? Are teachers given opportunities to work collaboratively toward addressing challenges and to grow professionally?
- ☐ How do you supplement training with other forms of ongoing support for educators, such as newsletters, Web sites, and peer support groups that focus mainly on strengthening instruction?
- ☐ What role does the state education agency play as approaches to professional development change? How are colleges and universities involved in these new approaches?

"If we expect our students to do well in the classroom, we must provide the resources for their teachers to stay at the top of their game."

— George H. Ryan, Governor of Illinois

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- **Vermont** provides teachers with portfolio-based training. Each student must compile a portfolio of writing and mathematics work, a "best piece," and a letter explaining the choices. Between two-thirds and four-fifths of teachers take part in state-supported professional development geared to help them use the portfolios in instruction and assessment.

- **California** recently provided mathematics teachers with extended training based firmly on the state standards. University of Michigan researcher David Cohen found that teachers who receive such professional development not only are more likely to use reform-oriented teaching strategies than colleagues, but they are also more likely to have higher-achieving students.

- In 1997 **Arkansas** mandated an innovative form of peer-supported professional development. The mandate required school districts to provide a minimum of 200 minutes a week for educational preparation, planning and conferences.

- Through the **Wisconsin** Academy Staff Development Initiative, teachers participate in an intensive, one-week, 30-hour mathematics seminar that incorporates science and educational technology. The seminar, which emphasizes the state's mathematics and science standards, prepares teachers to share classroom strategies with colleagues at their own schools. State officials credit the initiative with helping make Wisconsin one of the most improved states in the 1998 NAEP mathematics test.

- The **West Virginia** Center for Professional Development provides statewide coordination of professional development. The Center convenes a Governor's Summer Institute each year to help teachers achieve high standards. In addition, a week-long Principal Leadership Academy provides leadership development for all school administrators. Every principal is required to participate once every four years. The Professional Development Academy Program provides new and potential administrators instruction in evaluation of personnel based on state policy and best practices. The evaluation program also works with mentors for new teachers and provides support for new teachers in the state.

promising practices in profile

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Massachusetts places primary responsibility for professional development on school districts, which are required to create and implement yearly professional development plans for all teachers, principals, other professional staff and school council members.

While the state also supports other training opportunities at the school, district and state levels, Massachusetts requires each district to devise its own plan outlining the specific content of local professional development, including training on teaching the state's curriculum frameworks and other skills needed to implement the state's standards based education reform law. Each district also must identify the data to be collected on professional growth and the impact of training.

Expecting Excellence in Educational Leadership

States are starting to take stock of emerging shortages of qualified education leaders. Roughly half of all principals will either retire or leave the profession in the next 10 years, and more than half of all district superintendents are more than 50 years old. An aging workforce, dwindling pool of new applicants, and a surge in student enrollment have resulted in a high demand for school leaders who are prepared to do the job. All this comes when schools are being asked to improve student achievement and are increasingly being held accountable for results.

Like the threat posed by the teacher shortage, the crisis of educational leadership cannot be resolved by hiring "warm bodies" to head schools and districts. To guide standards-based reforms in our schools, we need effective leadership at the classroom, school, district, and state levels. New and veteran leaders must have the skills to guide and support key reforms. Leaders at all levels must work in concert to align policies, share information, build capacity, and implement efforts to help students achieve high standards. Competing priorities cannot distract our schools from their mission: strengthening teaching and learning.

States tackling this relatively new challenge might consider solutions that include improving preservice preparation for future principals and superintendents, dedicating additional resources to provide high-quality professional development, and developing alternative routes of entry so nontraditional candidates can serve as school or district leaders. States should also take advantage of opportunities presented by several national foundations that focus on this issue. Projects by the Broad Foundation, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, and several national organizations convene representatives from education, government, business, and other sectors to forge consensus on priorities for action.

ask yourself...

- ☐ What training do you currently offer principals, district superintendents, school board members, and state education leaders to equip them for leadership in the era of standards-based education?
- ☐ Do you have adequate information to project your state's needs for "filling the pipeline" with effective principals and district superintendents?
- ☐ What strategies are you using to ensure individuals preparing to fill these positions in the coming decade will have the knowledge and skills necessary to lead public education efforts to raise standards? Do you provide strong induction, mentoring and other supports for new leaders, especially principals and superintendents?
- ☐ How are you attracting promising individuals from nontraditional backgrounds, such as private business and the military, to explore educational leadership roles? What preparation, training, and support are you providing for these individuals?
- ☐ How do you hold education leaders at every level—school, district and state—accountable for results?

PROMISING PRACTICES

- The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, initiated in 1994 by the Council of Chief State School Officers, develops model standards and assessments for school leaders. This consortium of states and associations works with representatives of state education agencies, professional standards boards and educational leadership organizations to set standards and criteria for school leaders. More than two-thirds of the states have adapted or adopted the consortium's national standards for school leaders.

- **Indiana** is restructuring its department of education based on the seven criteria of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Supported by the National Alliance of Business, the Baldrige Award brings the private-sector philosophy of "quality management" to public education. Indiana is reviewing mission statements, refining agency objectives and holding meetings with employees about changes. The department aims to redefine its leadership role from that of regulatory agency to a user-friendly supporter of schools.

- Established in 1984 by the **North Carolina** general assembly, the Principals' Executive Program (PEP) provides professional development supports for principals, assistant principals and other school leaders across the state. Located at the University of North Carolina's Center for School Leadership Development, the PEP models its professional growth program after Harvard University's training program for business executives. Participants receive in-depth training on school leadership issues through a unique residential program, as well as access to free telephone consultations on school law issues and to a library of books, videotapes and audiocassettes.

- **Massachusetts** conducts leadership academies to provide training for principals and other administrators on using data to make informed decisions about curriculum and instruction; evaluating staff and providing ongoing supervision of staff to ensure effective teaching practices that meet the needs of all students; developing effective school improvement plans; and working with school councils, parents, and the community.

"Research shows that a key to effective schools is a strong principal."

— Gray Davis, Governor of California

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Reporting on Performance to Spur Improvement

School leaders, policymakers, and others in the education community need timely, relevant, and accurate information to make smart decisions. Effective collection, interpretation, and use of data are essential for policy development and decisions. The public needs relevant information, too. Whether through school report cards, Web sites, or parent brochures, states are beginning to make school performance data publicly available to help guide state and local decisionmaking—and to keep the pressure on public education systems for continuous improvement. In fact, 45 states now publicly report on individual schools' performance, 27 states rate schools based largely on performance, and 19 states use rating systems to target low-performing schools for special assistance.

"Just as report cards for students grab the attention of parents, report cards for schools have an audience that is ready to listen," according to *Reporting Results*, a report by A-Plus Communications and *Education Week*. "Poll after poll shows that improving education is the public's top priority. Accountability reports that document these improvements provide education leaders with a magic moment to communicate with their community. The challenge is to take advantage of that moment."

ask yourself...

- Do you gather, interpret, and disseminate school data in ways that effectively shape policy and governance decisions?
- Do you provide student achievement information in ways that allow readers to make comparisons of students representing different races, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, and schools—as well as comparisons of current performance against past performance?
- Are data and information accessible and understandable to teachers, students and the public? Do you communicate results in easy-to-understand language or education jargon?
- How do you communicate with the news media to make sense of student achievement results and help others use the information for school improvement?
- Have you worked with groups of teachers, parents, and community leaders to develop reader-friendly reports for annual release of student achievement results, supplemented by more detailed information on the Internet? Or, instead, do you collect volumes of data that are not adequately processed, interpreted, disseminated, or used to fuel improvement?

"Higher expectations for students and dedicated efforts by teachers provide quality education, and stellar academic performance is the result."

— James S. Gilmore III, Governor of Virginia

PROMISING PRACTICES

- ☐ **Georgia** issues an annual report card for each of its 1,844 schools, providing information on student achievement and the overall quality of education at the site. According to the department of education, the number of schools preparing local improvement plans has tripled since 1996, when the state first published report cards.

- ☐ **South Carolina** rates schools as improving when their student performance gains are greater than what their previous performance indicated. Thus, schools can be recognized for progress even when they struggle near the bottom of the state's ranks.

- ☐ **Maryland's** Web site (www.mdk12.org) provides detailed information on performance at the state, district and school level. Attractive, easy-to-read charts and graphs make information accessible. The site also contains an overview of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, information on the ways schools are focusing reform efforts, and descriptions of school improvement processes and best practices.

promising practices in public

USING DATA TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT

Former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson said, "I want to know where the highest performing schools in mathematics are so I can steal their ideas." In **Texas**, a business-backed nonprofit program called Just for the Kids has already taken this idea—turning successful reform efforts into action.

The Just for the Kids Web site (www.just4kids.org) identifies top-achieving Texas schools, describes their practices and helps educators transfer these approaches to their own schools. The site provides district-level and school-level data to identify high-performing schools, annual gaps between selected schools and "top-performing schools," and educational best practices. More than 1,000 public schools have engaged training to use the site's data analysis in school improvement efforts.

Accessed each day by more than 500 Texas citizens, educators and others, the site has become a powerful catalyst for local school reform across the state. State education leaders credit the informative, user-friendly site with helping build the foundation of public understanding and support required for Texas' ambitious reforms. Just for the Kids and the Education Commission of the States recently embarked on a new initiative to share the Web site's model with up to three additional states.

Forging Dynamic Parent and Community Partnerships

State leaders know that public schools truly belong to the public so they increasingly take care to build public support to advance the ambitious school reform efforts of standards-based education. A handful of states have been leaders in providing information, inviting serious dialogue and sharing the work of improving schools with parents, families, business people, higher education representatives and others.

The recent reaction against high-stakes tests in some states, prompted largely by the threat of schools holding back unprecedented numbers of students, underscores the critical need for building broad and sustainable public support. Public opposition can derail efforts before they can yield useful results if states fail to build adequate public support for their reforms.

Hard lessons have taught state leaders to involve parents and other community members early in the reform process and to maintain public support by various means. This can include publishing regular newsletters for parents, building user-friendly Web sites that feature program and performance information, and convening town meetings on proposed initiatives. State leaders can forge the partnerships necessary to promote shared understanding for standards-based reform and responsibility for its success.

ask yourself...

- ☐ How well are teachers and school administrators—your most direct line of communication with the wider community—prepared to build understanding and support for standards-based education?
- ☐ How well are your school systems reaching out to public entities beyond the local PTA and chamber of commerce to advance standards efforts? Have you helped form community partnerships with other family groups, business coalitions, faith-based organizations, foundations, civic groups and social service agencies? Do these organizations understand their roles in supporting and sustaining standards?
- ☐ How effectively do partner groups work to influence the legislature, seek external financial support and advocate for standards-based education measures?
- ☐ Do you have a broad, deep and diverse enough network of supporters to effectively address concerns and criticisms? Can these supporters effectively present a unified, coherent response to complaints or controversy?

Hard lessons have taught state leaders to involve parents and other community members early in the reform process.

PROMISING PRACTICES

The effort to set **New Jersey** content standards benefited greatly from former Governor Christine T. Whitman's work in building public consensus. During the 18-month standard-writing process, Governor Whitman hosted two television programs on the standards and invited citizens to provide comments. These played a large part in ensuring input from educators, parents, business leaders and representatives of higher education.

Similarly in **Massachusetts**, Mass Insight Education helped prepare legislators, educators, citizens and news media representatives for initial scores on the state's standards-based assessment. Through publications and a series of meetings with opinion leaders, Mass Insight Education helped minimize public resistance that almost always greets tough, new tests.

Like the Test Dyes encouraged hundreds of **Delaware** citizens to take the state's new test while visiting fast-food restaurants, department stores, shopping malls and other public places. The state effectively demonstrated how rigorous the test was — citizens were more understanding when results showed many students performing below standard.

Former **Texas** Governor George W. Bush gained support for reform education initiatives from the Governor's Business Council, a coalition of about 100 corporations that supports public policies important to the state's health. The council has been instrumental in promoting the state's school accountability system, supporting efforts to strengthen literacy and decrease social promotion, improving teacher preparation and training, and introducing technological innovations to the school system.

New York distributed more than 4 million copies of the state's new assessment as newspaper inserts. By showing citizens that the test effectively covered the knowledge and skills students should know, the state gained support for the measure.

Washington's

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Conclusion

The standards-based education efforts state education leaders have pioneered for more than 15 years have brought us to this moment of opportunity: With a vision of ambitious educational expectations firmly established in nearly every state, we are better positioned than ever before to create public school systems capable of meeting those expectations.

It will not be easy. To meet unparalleled goals, students, teachers and administrators must receive unprecedented support from state education leaders. However, governors, legislators, state education chiefs and members of state boards of education can help provide this support by addressing critical needs in academic standards, aligned assessments, accountability systems, teacher quality, professional development, educational leadership, reporting on performance, and parent and community partnerships.

The vision of high standards is within reach. Working together, across state boundaries and across organizational boundaries within states, state leaders can help educators make the promise of higher academic standards a reality for students, families, schools and communities throughout the nation.

National Governors Association
National Conference of State Legislatures
Council of Chief State School Officers
National Association of State Boards of Education
Education Commission of the States

2001